THE NECESSARY INSPIRATION

BY HOWARD FIELDING.

You and I know very little about great successes. We have deserved them, of course, but we have not had them yet. Therefore it will be extremely difficult for me to describe and for you to understand the feelings of Mr. Roland Blake in the early part of the current month.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth," was the way he expressed his sentiments to me when I offered my congratulations.

The new heaven must have referred to the winning of Emily Woodruff and the new earth to the fact that she had great possessions. It struck me that this allusion to his fiancee's money was

BLAKE CAME TO THE DOOR.

very delicate. The young lady is the granddaughter of the late Hettice Woodruff, in whose shop on Broadway the silks of the orient were transmuted into crude, unhandsome, occidental greenbacks. Nearly all his wealth was bequeathed to Emily, whose father holds it in trust until she shall be 25 years old, when she will own it as she owns the glove upon her hand.

This father of hers is a man whom one would expect to seek a mate for his daughter among the much maligned aristocrats of Europe or the almost equally unpopular millionaires of our own country. He is a hard headed man of business and one who would have his own way despite obstacles. While Emily is precisely the girl who would view with favor a handsome, romantic, unpractical writer of stories, her father is the last man to consent to such a folly. All who knew of Roland Blake's infatuation regarded his matrimonial chances to be as bad as possible. It was generally understood that he had been forbidden to call. Then suddenly the engagement was announced.

"It was as much a surprise to me as to any one," said Roland when I ventured to approach that subject. "I can hardly realize it yet. The fact is that Emily is a great girl, a wonder. It seems that she has cared for me all along."

This idea put Roland into a trance, from which I had to wake him somewhat rudely.

"Is Mr. Woodruff cordial?" I inquired.

"Tolerant," said Roland. "I could hardly say cordial. We had a long talk about my business affairs."

"Inexhaustible subject," said I. "How much do you owe, my son?"

"Oh, a thousand dollars or such a matter!" he replied. "But there were a few personal debts that I forgot to mention to Mr. Woodruff. He said I had done mighty well considering the miserable business I was in. Mr. Woodruff has not, I fear, a high opinion of literature.

"But what does all that matter now?" he continued, his eyes lighting up with the glow of energy and hope. "Look at this, old man! I've made a decent success in literature. My stories go into the good magazines, and there are a couple of books of mine which by their sales remunerate the publisher even if I don't get anything out of them, and I've done this against the worst possible odds.

"Worry? Heavens and earth! Why, any time in the last five years when an idea has got into my brain I've had to put my hat on to keep the voice of the creditor from chasing it up through the top of my head. The luck has been against me—bad luck in small matters, which is more dire than calamity.

"But now fortune has relented. I've got what I deserve, as Heine remarked when he dreamed that he was the ruler of the universe. Happiness is inspiration, and I am full of it. I'll bet you a hundred dollars to a cent that within this very week I write incontestably the best story of my life—something that will really make a hit."

His outer hands reached out to clutch paper and pen, and I rose hastily. Far be it from me to stand idly in the way of an inspiration.

"Speaking of Emily," he said, "of course you understand that we're not to be married for a year or two. She's only 23, and—and—honestly, old man, is there another living creature like her?"

"No, there isn't," said I, and the answer was perfectly frank.

Whatever may be thought of the degree of Miss Woodruff's beauty, she is certainly a perfectly original creation. Nobody looks or speaks or moves in the least like her. When she walks along the street, all the people's heads go round as if they were cogwheels in a piece of machinery.

"Of course, as to her money," said he, "it's very unfortunate."

I laughed.

"You know what I mean," he protested. "People will say that I am seeking money, whereas heaven knows that if she were as poor as—as I am, by Jingo, it wouldn't make the slightest difference!"

"People will lie, whatever you do," I replied, "so don't let that worry you. Money is a good thing, and I'm glad you're to have some."

"I wonder how it will seem?" he said, and then cautiously, "Hush!"

A shadow appeared upon the ground glass panel of the door. A hand was laid upon the knob vainly and then came a loud, aggressive rap.

"It's Crowley!" whispered Blake. "He's collector for a confounded tailor! See the villain stand there and wait!"

The shadow fell darkly on the door. Obviously Crowley was a person of magnificent proportions.

"I used to be a good deal afraid of him," whispered Blake. "He's an offensive beggar, with a voice so carefully cultivated that he can dun a man on the ninth floor and make every word audible to the engineer in the subcellar. But those beasts won't bother me much longer. Why, my dear fellow, with this new happiness, this tremendous inspiration, to help me, I'll write enough stuff in the next three months to pay every debt and live like a prince besides."

"Go right ahead and do it, then," said I. "Don't waste precious time talking to me. I'll read a magazine till Crowley's feet get tired, and then I'll slip out."

Presently I heard his pen scratching on the paper, and it was pleasant to think that the words he was writing in the first flush of his happiness might live for centuries in the hearts of men. I felt proud to be present on such an occasion.

It may have been two hours later when I rose to go. Crowley's shadow had vanished. Blake, with the tip of his penholder pressed against his lips, was looking upward to the ceiling and through it to the clouds. There was a fine light in his eyes.

"Written much, old man?" I said.

"No," he replied. "I haven't put anything on paper yet."

"But I thought I heard your pen."

"That was while I was writing a little note to Emily," said he. "I can't go to see her this evening, and there were a few things that I wanted to say."

He folded half a dozen sheets of paper and put them into an envelope, upon which he wrote an address.

"Would you mind handing that to the fellow in the passenger office down stairs?" said he, giving me the envelope and half a dollar to pay for the message. "Thank you. Goodby. I'm going to work now."

The last glimpse I had of him he was still looking aloft, with the expression of a cherub about to sing a new song.

On Thursday I looked in upon Blake again. He was drawing little profiles of Miss Woodruff on a sheet of paper, for Blake is clever with the pencil as well as with the pen.

"How does the story come along?" I asked.

"What story?" he demanded.

"The masterpiece you began when I was here last," I replied.

"Oh, that be hanged!" he exclaimed. "It was rot. I threw it away."

"Haven't you started another?"

"Well, I've been getting my ideas together," said he. "There are one of two big things that I may start upon when I can get hold of them by the right end."

Then we had a nice long talk about Miss Woodruff, and, having decided in the course of about two hours that she was an incomparable angel, we adjourned the meeting and went out to play a game of billiards.

Sunday forenoon Blake and I took a bicycle ride together. I had never seen him so happy or so full of the fancies. He told me that he had begun a story and asked me to come to his den the next day and see what I thought of the introductory chapter.

I couldn't call on Monday, but I found the time Tuesday afternoon. Blake had written about 1,000 words substantially as they were to stand in the finished story, and I want to say here in strict confidence that they were far from good.

The style was quite different from Blake's ordinary. As a rule, when he attacks literature he cuts off a piece with a battleax and presents it to the public on the end of a spear. That's what I have always liked about his work.

I told him frankly that if the beginning of the new story gave any idea of what it was to be like throughout he had made a mistake.

"Sentimentalism isn't your forte," said I.

"This isn't sentimentality. It's genuine feeling," said he. "And it is properly expressed, because I've taken time with it. I've cut it down and worked it over, and I've viewed it always in the new light that has come to me. Bless the dear girl! Let's talk of her for awhile and let criticism rest. As for your opinion, I pity and forgive you. Let that suffice."

So we talked about the dear girl and, as before, wound up with a game of billiards. And, by the way, Blake made a Roman holiday of me. His billiards had improved a hundred per cent within the week.

It was agreed that I should drop in upon him at his lodgings after dinner. Miss Woodruff was not to be at home, and an evening in his bachelor quarters was the best that Blake could hope for.

It may have been 8 o'clock when I arrived. Blake came to the door of his little parlor in response to my rap. He had on an old red "sweater" with a faded H on the front of it. An old pair of trousers and a straw hat with no crown in it completed his visible attire.

I had seen Blake wear this hat before, when he had to work late at night. The brim shaded his eyes, and the absence of the crown, in his opinion, prevented an injurious effect upon the hair such as is said to come from wearing one's hat in the house.

Blake has plenty of hair, and in moments of excitement it stands out from his head at all sorts of angles. On the occasion in question it streamed up through that broken hat as if the circlet of straw had been a funnel supplied with a mighty draft of air.

"Everything has gone to the devil!" was his greeting to me.

"What do you mean?" I cried. "Has Miss Woodruff"—

"Oh, no; she's all right, but that infernal villain Hatfield, to whom I've owed a couple of hundred dollars for a year or two, is going to make trouble."

"What trouble can he make?" I demanded.

"Why, he'll tell Mr. Woodruff, and then my cake is dough," said Blake. "You see, I neglected to mention the Hatfield matter in my talk with Woodruff, and he'll remember that. I tell you it would ruin my life."

"But there's nothing disgraceful about this debt."

"No, except that I didn't tell Woodruff about it. There's the pinch. I've got to raise the money for Hatfield tomorrow."

"How in blue blazes are you going to do it?" I demanded. "I haven't it, and"—

"I've seen Harper," said Blake. "If I'll finish that Porto Rican romance for him, he'll pay spot cash. There's about 8,000 words to write, and I can't do it—except that I've got to. Why, old man, fancy my trying to write tonight. I'm so worried, so totally upset, that my brains are mush. I can't think of my own name. Yet I must do it. But, oh," he groaned, "it will be awful rot!"

He rather staggered than walked to his chair beside the big table in the center of the room.

"Sit down and keep still," he said, "but don't leave me. Just stay by through this night, and maybe I can turn the trick. If I'm left alone, I shall either go crazy or go to sleep, and one's as bad as the other tonight."

Three seconds later his pen was digging holes in the paper. At first it went heavily onward, and frequently he stopped and paced the floor, assuring me that no man so miserable as he was could possibly write.

Presently, however, he began to go more steadily. His eyes took on a glare. He no longer addressed any remarks to me, but he said things about Porto Rico and the character of his story to the air.

Meanwhile he smoked long black cigars, the ends of which he chewed savagely.

This continued for hours. About 1 o'clock he slowed up, and several times

HIS PEN WAS DIGGING HOLES IN THE PAPER.

I saw him sway in his chair. I knew what that meant, and I hastened out to an all night restaurant, whence I returned with some sandwiches and a quart of black coffee. This simple refreshment supplied the strength which toil had exhausted. For a long time thereafter the pen made a noise like a loose shingle on a barn in a gale of wind.

About 4 o'clock I began to doze. A little later I awoke with a start. The gas had been turned low, but there was light enough to see Blake stretched across the threshold of the bedroom door, his head upon a pillow that he had dragged off the bed.

"Don't disturb me, old man," he murmured as I bent over him. "The cursed thing is done."

I waited till he had sunk into a stupor and then lifted him upon the bed. At 10 the next morning I waked him, and we went to see Harper. The story passed through the mill, and Hatfield's claim was met in time to avert a calamity.

The Porto Rican story is out, and it has caught on hard. On that Tuesday night Blake kept his word, given to me a week ago Monday, that within ten days, having found the necessary inspiration, he would write something that would really make a hit.

COTTAGE VIOLIN MAKING.

In a letter to Music Trades, Mr. F. W. Kirk gives some very interesting facts concerning the cheap violin trade of Markneukirchen, Saxony. He says the violins are really made in Schienbach, a little village of 2,000 inhabitants several miles away from Markneukirchen, but as the latter place puts the finishing touches to the instruments it has come to have the fame for their production, while Schienbach struggles on unknown.

In Schienbach the student of sociology has a most important contemporary example of the cottage industry, the stage of industrial development that everywhere preceded the factory system, such as we are today familiar with. According to our writer the condition of the work people is deplorable, and if there be any philosopher en-route for Schienbach with purpose of substantiating a high ideal of the social state in the regime of the cottage industry, he had best turn back before that ideal is hopelessly shattered.

In the manufacture of the violins, not only is all the work done in the home, but every member of the family has some share in it. Children as young as ten years are very generally employed in polishing the "corpuses" as the glued violins are called in sandpapering corner blocks, etc., while older children and women are assigned more difficult work, and this in addition to the usual housework. Workmen sleep next their work, and rising early take up the work of the previous night before breakfast. The drudgery goes on day after day with only the shortest possible intermissions for eating and necessary chores.

With all this hard continuous labor it is difficult for many families to earn a bare subsistence. The price of an unfinished "corpus"—that is in the white, with neck uncarved, and without trimmings—is about 40 cents and the average family can earn at this price about $170.00 a year. Even this amount is not received in cash, but in trade at the grocery and material store. Fortunately most families supplement their earning by the product of a small garden patch and perhaps a cow also. A single case was noted where a violin-maker aided by his family made something over $300 in one year, but he has looked up to as a great exception and had a reputation of making "good" violins.

When the "corpuses" are ready for delivery to the exporter or finisher they are usually packed in large wicker baskets arranged to be strapped on to the back. The women shoulder these burdens, make the sales, and bring back the materials, for the men being usually the more skilled cannot be spared from the work bench. So it is everybody must work, from the dog dragging the little cart loaded with wood, up; everything that eats, must earn food.

Under these conditions the people are submerged and degraded, not that work does this, for that is an element of contentment always, but because of the too constant drudgery and the lack of opportunity for self-improvement, and recreation.

Violins from Markneukirchen go to all parts of the world, the United States taking a large proportion of them. One American dealer recently placed an order for 10,000.

A Novel Newspaper.

The most up-to-date of all modern newspapers is the Stereo-Revue published at Paris. This extraordinary newspaper gives the news of the day (or rather week), not in type, but in instantaneous photographs on a film, like that of a cinematograph. A bobbin of this film is the journal, and the subscriber puts it through a portable stereoscope like a field glass, and looks at the pictures, thereby reading the news."—Youth Estate.

A New Explosive.

An Italian named Cervara claims to have discovered a way to utilize electrically decomposed water as a high explosive. The Italian government is now experimenting with this new explosive, which its inventor has styled "cosmos." Tests have shown that the power developed is nearly 30 times as great as that of dynamite.

The Sultan of Turkey has appointed Prof. D. A. Kent, a member of the faculty of the Iowa State Agricultural college, to be instructor in farming for the Turkish government.